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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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DR. JEFF BLEA WILL BE EQUINE MEDICAL DIRECTOR FOR CHRB

ARCADIA, CA – Dr. Jeff Blea has been a trusted voice in the California horse racing industry for decades, and in July he will become the veterinary voice of the California Horse Racing Board upon the long-planned retirement of Dr. Rick Arthur from the critically important position of Equine Medical Director (EMD).

While Dr. Blea has been committed to his thriving veterinary practice on the Southern California thoroughbred circuit, he recently decided he could be a more valuable resource to the equine veterinary profession and provide greater assistance in the advancement of the racing industry.

Dr. Gregory Ferraro, chairman of CHRB and a former equine veterinarian himself on the southern circuit, described Dr. Blea as “a nationally known and widely respected equine veterinarian. He is recognized for his clear thinking and fairness in his decision making.”

Under contract arrangements between the CHRB and the School of Veterinary Medicine (SVM) at the University of California, Davis, the EMD serves as a member of its faculty. CHRB Executive Director Scott Chaney said the CHRB worked closely with UC Davis during the process, which was prolonged by the pandemic. A joint panel from UC Davis and the CHRB interviewed candidates and selected Dr. Blea.

“We value this partnership,” added Chaney. “We were fortunate to consider several well-qualified candidates. I am very pleased with the process and the choice. I look forward to working closely with Dr. Blea to make racing safer at this critical time.”

Dr. John Pascoe, SVM executive associate dean, commented: ‘We very much look forward to Dr. Blea serving as the next Equine Medical Director and continuing the vision of late Senator Ken Maddy for a robust partnership between the University of California-Davis, the CHRB, and the racing industry to improve the health and welfare of racing horses. Jeff brings a wealth of expertise to the EMD position. His extensive knowledge of racing, equine and racetrack practice, his national leadership in equine and racing organizations, and his commitment to research that improves horse racing assure that California will continue to lead the nation in our collective efforts to ensure safe racing.’

Dr. Blea brings 28 years of veterinary experience with him, and before that he rode briefly as a jockey. He always has been interested in improving horse racing, focusing primarily on equine health and welfare, as evidenced by his leadership nationally with the American Association of Equine Practitioners and regionally with the Southern California Equine Foundation. He served as a director of the Dolly Green Research Foundation from 1999 to 2015. The list of the organizations and programs he has served is long and admirable.

Dr. Blea always has been forthcoming, expressing common sense and fairness, regardless of which side he favored on any given issue.

“As Equine Medical Director,” he said, “I look forward to working with industry stakeholders in further advancing the progressive transformation of horse racing in California with the emphasis on horse safety, welfare, and integrity.”

Dr. Arthur added, “Dr. Blea is an excellent choice to become EMD. He has a broad background in horse racing and is well respected by his colleagues here in California and nationally.

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